

and Rocky Mtn Power Center

My name is Melinda McIlwaine. I live in Emigration Canyon in Salt Lake County. I am here today as a human, a mother and a naturalist. We live at a time when we, as an intelligent species, must make intelligent choices. Climate change science is irrefutable. We can see what is happening, more frequent incidences of violent weather, milder winters, shrinking snowpack. We can also see our human influences on these changes in the form of regional haze and inversions. Change is inevitable and the planet will adapt with or without us. The expansion of the Alton Coal mine will impact a species that has gotten a lot of press lately, the greater sage grouse. In lieu of having the sage grouse listed on the Endangered Species List, Utah agreed to ramp up its efforts to protect this bird and its habitat. The Alton coal mine will impact leks where these birds accomplish their annual mating rituals. Unlike wetlands that are sacrificed for dams, roads, shopping malls, housing developments and other human disturbances, leks, which have been established for thousands of years, cannot be moved or mitigated. When compared to the many families that have made their livings and dyings by coal, one might ask "How important are these birds?" Let me suggest that they represent a warning to all of us for their extinction presages our own. Just as the sage grouse cannot move its lek, we as a species cannot adapt to poisoning our planetary air and water with fossil fuel emissions. If we can spend trillions on our war machine we can find the pocket change to shift to a clean energy infrastructure. We can find the funds to deconstruct and rebuild our energy grid. We can bring those who have toiled underground for generations up above ground and into the daylight. We can retrain that workforce and say good bye to a polluting energy source that is no longer appropriate to the health of our species and those we share the planet with. To the BLM and the federal government and the state of Utah, I ask for the leadership that will move us towards a renewable energy future, a leadership that has the moral courage with regard to fossil fuels to "leave it in the ground".

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